

## **PLANNING A SUSTAINABLE VILLAGE HALL**

### **Community Consultations**

Various suggestions were made on how to involve the community in the planning of a hall:

- One group hosted an architectural competition open to the community, to enable them to vote on a final plan. A number of reputable architecture firms were asked to submit sketch plans that would be acceptable for planning. The architects entered the competition with the hope of winning the contract and this was agreed on a no win, no fee basis. The successful architect was expected to cost his sketches in a more detailed brief at the next stage. The competition did not directly incur any costs.
- A 'brain storming day' was held, where members of the community were able to express their preferences for what should be housed inside a new hall, followed by a 'prioritising of ideas day'.
- Cross-community visits can be arranged by CADISPA to other rural halls for ideas.
- Information could be disseminated via community newsletters, open meetings, potential plans on display in public areas, researching hall user groups and the needs of external agencies for space.

### **Feasibility/Consultation Studies**

- Organising as many consultations as possible to enable the community to become fully involved and create an awareness of the project was felt to be crucial. Evidence is needed to demonstrate that you have a mandate to act.

#### Examples

- 1) The cost of a recent appraisal on a proposed community leisure centre - £4,500
- 2) A business plan development - £3,000

### **Fees/Potential Costs**

- Recommendation was made that management charges should be included in funding applications e.g. a 5% administration fee.
- Suggestions were made that fixed fees from professionals, e.g. architects, quantity surveyors etc would be best practice rather than a percentage of the total costs, as increased costs could lead to additional fee charges. Care should be taken to retain control over your project as architect may be keen to incorporate their design preferences.

- Once community consultations have been carried out, these will then inform professionals of the exact specifications for the new hall.
- Employing firms of professionals rather than individuals was seen to be more beneficial and it was suggested that the appointed quantity surveyor produce monthly projections.
- Costs for professional fees varied from area to area.

### **Funding**

- A charity should be registered for the aim of achieving funding for the hall, or alternatively, a system whereby you are able to act as trustees.
- Persistence, determination, perseverance – this was critical advice given by the groups relating to funding. If unsuccessful, ask the funder **why**. It may be possible for you to amend your application to fit their criteria.
- Fundraising is a difficult task but there are benefits!! These include involvement of the community, the social and recreational aspects, and the sense of achievement for those involved. Outcomes should not only be viewed in monetary terms.
- One of the groups highlighted their experience of employing a recommended, professional fund raiser on a no gain, no fee basis. However, this had been a bit of a disaster and after several months he resigned, much to the groups relief!

CADISPA would encourage groups to carry out their own fundraising. Although a laborious and often disappointing task, it helps to build capacity and new skills within the community for future developments. The sweet taste of success, having achieved it yourself is one that cannot be bought!

CADISPA offers groups a fundraising service, support and access to funding consultants. The Rural Gateway website includes up to date funding information <http://www.ruralgateway.org.uk/> and SCVO <http://www.villagehalls.org.uk/Home/Home.aspx> as well as other services in rural Scotland.

### **Sustainability**

- Projects that are external to the hall project, for example, one group purchased their harbour as a community asset and this has created a continual income stream.
- Consideration should be given as to fundraising and how to accumulate funding with minimum effort.

- The building or hall is not the only benefit to the community, other benefits will stem from the project - employment opportunities, skills, sense of ownership and a cohesive community.

### **Management**

- Funding for a hall manager/project officer should be made separately from the capital project as this could influence its funding. Manager/Project/Development Officer should be viewed as part of a future sustainability plan.
- Consideration could be given to employing a manager for hall's first year and then for the post to become voluntary, shared responsibility amongst the community, once systems have been established and tested.
- Consideration should be given to offer training for Directors, on specific issues like child protection, and this can be provided through organisations like CADISPA and the DTA.
- Stewarding and fire safety – training could be offered to volunteers from the community.
- Employer responsibility needs to be explored fully and employers' liability insurance. Consideration could be given to the post holder becoming self-employed as this would take pressure off the hall committee. Other issues included the responsibility of being an employer, in particular, disciplinary actions etc.
- Administrative duties – consider organising this on a voluntary delegation basis for the wider community.
- Bookings forms should be created for managing bookings and an online booking system could be established with additional benefits of advertising revenue. A deposit system could be put in place e.g. month's rental in advance. For groups using the facilities on a regular basis, designated access to keys could be a solution.
- Shared use of space – consider renting space to local authority, external agencies e.g. educational purposes/resource centre.
- A hall maintenance fund could be considered and funds left to accumulate over the years to pay for essential maintenance costs.
- Maintenance contracts could be set up on an annual basis for essential equipment such as heating systems.
- Continual marketing/promotion of hall both within the community and to external organisations.

### **Charity/VAT Regulations**

- Only 10% of the income raised from the hall can be generated from external sources, the other 90% has to come from local usage. Ernst & Young in Edinburgh was suggested as a contact for VAT issues and registering the hall for VAT purposes allows you to claim back building costs. However, by doing this it means that the hall is liable for VAT in the future.
- Setting up subsidiary companies for trading purposes, separate from the hall company, was recommended.
- There are specific activities that take place in halls that makes them liable for VAT, e.g. weddings/parties. However, if the group organise the event themselves they become exempt.
- Advice on VAT issues related to charitable organisations can be sourced from the VAT advice centre - 0845 010 9000 and it is advisable to request a copy of the response in writing!

### **Insurance**

- It was recommended to shop about for best deal on insurance as costs may depend on area. It is worth contacting your local authority as they may be able to offer block insurance. Examples of costs include, Craignish Hall £1,600 pa; Boat of Garten hall £1,100 pa.
- As well as building insurance, employer's and public liability insurance need to be included.
- For legal requirements some insurance companies will need an annual risk assessment to be carried out.
- Fire officer approval will be required prior to insurers considering cover.

### **Licensing Regulations**

- It is necessary to apply for a public entertainment licence in advance, entitling you to four licences a year. However, individual groups requesting a licence can apply independently.
- Some local authorities will provide an on-going entertainment licenses.

### **Hall Membership and Charges**

- One group asked their members for a small one-off payment of £1, however due to financial difficulties, members were then asked for a donation of £25 per annum - this donation entitled members to a discount for hall usage. Some of members chose to donate more and the increased cost has not affected membership numbers. Concessions

were offered to those people on a low wages, young people, senior citizens etc.

- Various formats of booking were discussed i.e. hourly blocks/three hourly blocks/discounts for regular groups. However, the consensus was that manageable systems would be led by the groups using the hall.
- Hiring of the hall for weddings parties creates a great deal of work but this was considered worthwhile to boost hall funds. A wedding licence application will cost the hall around £500. However, more than one wedding group per year needs to be secured to justify the set-up costs. Other options are single wedding licences that can be obtained by the bride and groom themselves.
- Invoicing and pursuing late payments is time consuming. Consideration should be given to payments being made in advance or requesting large deposits.

### **Accounts**

- Annual accounts, prepared professionally, are estimated to cost around £600-£1,000. However, a number of people thought that unless the hall was generating a huge amount of income then they could consider identifying a volunteer in the community, e.g. a retired accountant, as using local skills would help to create a more independent and confident community. Others felt that there was an over reliance on the local community and that accounting duties were a huge responsibility for volunteers. Some concerns were made about the difficulties should discrepancies arise.
- Funders will require you to provide them with up to date accounts annually.

### **Booking Systems**

- Methods of managing bookings were suggested - a hall diary and a calendar system - both of which could be managed online.
- Although an attractive option, it was felt that internet bookings take away an element of control over usage of the hall and there could be issues of security.

### **Entry Charges**

- Concessions for events was discussed and questions were raised over what groups should warrant discounts. Family concessions and discounts for children were thought to be acceptable to some groups, whilst other hall groups gave concessions to low wage earners and children.

- Not all events held in the hall will be profitable but these may have a more important factor e.g., educational events for children and theatre/musical productions for the community.

### **Monitoring**

- Monitoring the usage of the hall was felt to be important, particularly in the first two years (a number of funders will make this a condition of the grant). Funding could be identified to carry out the evaluation, for example, the Lottery and ERDF. In some cases, formal monitoring visits were arranged by the funder.

### **Child Protection**

- Disclosure applications are only necessary for adults working with groups of children so it is not necessary for hall committees to apply. However, it is the responsibility of the hall committee to ensure that adults working with children whilst using the hall's premises produce valid evidence.

### **Access**

- Various options of access security were discussed and again this is very much dependent on the hall committee. In some cases, keys were given to all groups using the hall. Other options included a door entry system and key system that only permitted access to specific areas.

### **Renewable Energy Options**

- One group used a green architect.
- After extensive consultation with environmental agencies, one group decided that solar power alone would be insufficient for their needs. However, they did use solar panels as a top-up option and this has now generated so much hot water that they are considering selling on to neighbouring businesses.
- One group encountered difficulties with their under floor heating system as it took one day to warm up the building to a comfortable temperature. This led to excess and unnecessary expenditure on the budget for the first year.
- Ground source heating proved problematic for another group and similarly tracking down an elusive heating engineer! It has taken this group a considerable amount of time to familiarise themselves with the system and use it efficiently.

### **Additional Advice**

- A number of people stated that they had learned more from a few years involvement on community committees than they had in twenty-

five years of working for other people. Many volunteers had gone on to use their new skills in their personal and work life.

- One group shared the cost of their website with another community group after they had identified funding for set up costs. As well as creating an online booking system, websites are good way to advertise local information and a way of creating income from the advertising of local/external business etc.
- One group conducted a skills/business audit of the area and found over seventy businesses operating from a relatively small village, many of them from home. This demonstrated a huge skills residual within the community and individuals could be identified as part of a volunteer drive.
- The importance of keeping well documented Minutes was advised. Were issues to arise, groups need to be able to refer to Minutes to provide evidence and to show that decisions were made correctly.
- The development of a project requires patience and commitment from volunteers. Time is needed for the committees and community to come to terms with new ideas and to fully understand them. To proceed with speed when the community is not ready is a potential disaster.
- One size does not fit all –this applies to all aspects of community development!
- Hall projects are normally only one facet of a bigger plan for the long-term development of a community.
- £100,000 was raised from local fundraising efforts by one group over a fifteen year period (80% of which was raised in the last three years). This success stemmed from an on-going funding drive and some of their ideas included:- lectures and talks using local experts; an auction; HoG in the BOG (annual barbeque for Harley Davidson enthusiasts)
- Members of the community cannot sit on the Board without having director status but it is possible to have shadow directors and be ordinary members. However, it should be noted that shadow directors have the same liabilities as director, as they are also classed as decision makers.
- Right to Buy (land) was discussed and some of the groups felt that they would consider this option in the future. Memo and Articles can be changed to enable this to be done. For further information <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2004/06/19478/38605>